

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-14

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ACDA-19 SAM-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /156 W

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O R 010900Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6311

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USIA WASHDC

JCS

SECDEF WASHDC

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STATE FOR S/PRS AND EA/P

SECDEF FOR OASD/PA

USINFO FOR VOA NEWSROOM

USIA FOR IEA

E. O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S ASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY SITUATION

1. FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS CONTAIN THE EMBASSY'S INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF A PRESS STATEMENT MADE IN FRENCH BY PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET ASSESSING THE OVERALL MILITARY SITUATION IN CAMBODIA AS THE CURRENT DRY SEASON COMES TO A CLOSE. WE BELIEVE THIS TO BE A FRANK AND BALANCED ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMEND THAT IT BE DRAWN UPON IN DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS ON THE CAMBODIA SITUATION. THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO GIVE THIS TEXT WIDER DISSEMINATION.

2. BEGIN TEXT AS WE APPROACH THE END OF THE DRY SEASON I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO REVIEW THE GENERAL MILITARY SITUATION.

3. MILITARY ACTION IS GENERALLY MORE INTENSE DURING THE DRY SEASON. IT IS DURING THIS PERIOD THAT DECISIVE RESULTS CAN BE ATTAINED BY THE MILITARY OPPONENTS. THE LAST DRY SEASON WAS MARKED BY A HIGH LEVEL OF ENEMY ACTIVITY IN THE KHMER REPUBLIC. ABANDONING GUERRILLA TACTICS FOR CONVENTIONAL WARFARE, THE ENEMY LAUNCHED A MAJOR OFFENSIVE AGAINST PHNOM PENH. AT THAT TIME KHMER ARMED FORCES ENJOYED EXTENSIVE AMERICAN AIR SUPPORT, BOTH TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC. ON AUGUST 15, 1973, AMERICAN BOMBING CEASED AND I RECALL HOW FEARFUL WE WERE OF OUR FUTURE. SINCE THAT TIME THE WAR HAS BEEN DIFFICULT, VERY DIFFICULT, BUT WE ARE STILL HERE.

4. MY PURPOSE FOR GATHERING YOU HERE IS TO GIVE YOU AN OVERALL PERSPECTIVE OF THE MILITARY SITUATION AS WE NOW SEE IT. I CANNOT SAY THAT THE MILITARY SITUATION IS EXCELLENT. THIS IS NOT THE CASE. BUT IT IS NOT AS BAD AS SOME HAVE REPORTED. CERTAINLY WE HAVE HAD REVERSES, WHICH THE PRESS HAS COVERED WELL, PERHAPS TOO WELL. DAY BY DAY REPORTS OF WARFARE HIGHLIGHT THE DRAMATIC, THAT IS ENEMY ATTACKS AND OUR LOSSES. WE SHOULD STAND BACK AND TAKE A BROADER VIEW OF OPERATIONS IN ORDER TO APPRAISE MORE ACCURATELY THE MILITARY SITUATION. WE HAVE UNTIL NOW PERHAPS NOT DONE THIS AS FREQUENTLY AS WE SHOULD. LET US EXAMINE THEREFORE THE SITUATION AS IT HAS DEVELOPED DURING THE DRY SEASON WHICH IS NOW COMING TO AN END.

5. AT THE BEGINNING OF JANUARY 1974 THE COMMUNISTS
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DIRECTED THEIR EFFORTS AGAINST OUR CAPITAL. THEY LAUNCHED A MAJOR OFFENSIVE, ATTACKING FROM ALL DIRECTIONS WITH 23,000 MEN ORGANIZED IN 75 BATTALIONS AND LOGISTICALLY SUPPORTED BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG. TO LAUNCH AN OFFENSIVE OF THIS SIZE, THE ENEMY WAS FORCED TO WITHDRAW MEN AWAY FROM FOUR MILITARY REGIONS. BUT THIS MAJOR EFFORT FAILED. PHNOM PENH RESISTED AND THE ENEMY SUFFERED SIGNIFICANT LOSSES. WE ESTIMATE ENEMY CASUALTIES AT 6,000 KILLED AND MORE THAN 4,000

WOUNDED. THIS DEFEAT WAS THE RESULT OF DETERMINED AND COORDINATED EFFORTS BY ALL OUR ARMED FORCES: BY OUR INFANTRY, OUR ARTILLERY, THE EFFECTIVE USE OF OUR ARMoured VEHICLES, AS WELL AS THE ACTIVE SUPPORT OF OUR YOUNG AIR FORCE AND OUR NAVY. ALTHOUGH THE CITY OF PHNOM PENH UNDERWENT ROCKET AND ARTILLERY ATTACKS, THIS DOES NOT HIDE THE FACT THAT THE ENEMY FAILED TO ATTAIN HIS PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE, WHICH WAS TO TAKE OUR CAPITAL CITY.

6. AT THE END OF FEBRUARY, THE ENEMY SHIFTED HIS ACTION TO THE PROVINCES. THIS CHANGE IN TACTICS WAS DUE TO THE ENEMY'S FAILURE AT PHNOM PENH AS WELL AS TO THE NEED TO STEM A GREAT EXODUS BY A LARGE PART OF THE RURAL POPULATION WHO WERE STRONGLY DETERMINED TO REJOIN THE GOVERNMENT'S SIDE. FROM JANUARY TO THE END OF MAY 1974, WE REGISTERED 143,110 PERSONS WHO HAD FLED VARIOUS ENEMY ZONES.

7. THIS LAST FACTOR WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AT KOMPONG THOM, WHERE THE ENERGETIC INITIATIVES OF CIVIL AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES PERMITTED THE POPULATION OF OCCUPIED ZONES TO REACH REFUGE IN THAT CITY. DURING THE MONTHS OF FEBRUARY AND MARCH, OUR TROOPS ADVANCED AS FAR AS 50 KILOMETERS BEYOND KOMPONG THOM, REACHING TOWNS SUCH AS STAUNG. 36,000 PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL SINCE 1970 TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO FLEE WITH THEIR CATTLE AND THEIR POSSESSIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED ENCLAVE. THIS POPULATION MOVEMENT HAS CREATED BOTH FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS FOR US, WHICH WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RESOLVE THANKS TO THE

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O R 010900Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6312
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
COMUSSAG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
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ASSISTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORT
OF OUR ADMINISTRATION'S PROGRAMS. THIS EXODUS, WHICH
DEMONSTRATED THE POPULATION'S SUPPORT FOR OUR CAUSE, FORCED THE
ENEMY TO REACT. THUS ON MAY 10 THE ENEMY ATTACKED KOMPONG THOM.
DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF THIS ACTION, THE ENEMY SUFFERED MORE THAN
100 KILLED AND MANY ARMS CAPTURED BY OUR FORCES. SINCE THIS INITIAL
SETBACK, THE ENEMY HAS REINFORCED HIS UNITS BUT OUR TROOPS HAVE
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STOOD THEIR GROUND. NO MILITARY POSITION HAS BEEN LOST BY OUR
FORCES. ON THE CONTRARY, AS THE ATTACK ENTERS ITS THIRD WEEK
IT IS OUR FORCES WHO NOW HOLD THE INITIATIVE AND WHO ARE ATTACK-
ING THE ENEMY AROUND KOMPONG THOM. KOMPONG THOM THEREFORE RE-
PRESENTS A SUCCESS FOR THE REPUBLIC.

8. IN IMPLEMENTING THEIR STRATEGY OF CONCENTRATING ON
PROVINCIAL TARGETS, THE ENEMY SEIZED UPON KAMPOT, AN ISOLATED
PROVINCIAL CAPITAL WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO REINFORCE AND RESUPPLY,
DESPITE THESE LOGISTICS PROBLEMS, WE SUCCEEDED IN REINFORCING
THE GARRISON BY AIR AND BY SEA AND WE STOPPED THE ENEMY. AT KAMPOT
WE ARE NOW TURNING OUR ATTENTION TO RESTORING NORMAL LIVING
CONDITIONS AFTER THE LIFTING OF THE SIEGE.

9. SIMULTANEOUS WITH THE ATTACK ON KAMPOT, THE ENEMY TURNED
ON OUDONG. HAVING SENT TWO BRIGADES FROM PHNOM PENH TO DEFEND KAMPOT,
THE GENERAL STAFF DID NOT HAVE FORCES IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE TO SEND
TO OUDONG. THE GENERAL STAFF WAS FORCED TO WITHDRAW COMBAT UNITS
FROM OTHER OPERATIONS AND TO SEND THEM TO KOMPONG LUONG WHERE
THEY WERE ENGAGED IN VERY HEAVY COMBAT. THE TOWN OF OUDONG FELL.
THIS WAS CLEARLY A GREAT SETBACK. LATER THE BRIDGEHEAD AT KOMPONG
LUONG HAD TO BE EVACUATED. OUR LOSS OF SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS WAS

CONSIDERABLE. WE ALSO LOST MATERIEL. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO CITE DETAILS, WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN REPORTED BY THE PRESS. I MUST HOWEVER PAY HOMAGE TO OUR SOLDIERS WHO FOUGHT VALIANTLY AND TO OUR NAVY WHICH, DESPITE LOSSES OF MEN AND VESSELS, CONTINUED TO SUPPLY OUR TROOPS UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT.

10. THE ENEMY THEN DECIDED TO DENY US THE USE OF THE TONLE SAP BY CONSTRUCTING THREE BARRIERS ACROSS THIS RIVER AND ATTACKING THE GARRISON AT LOVEK, WHERE OUR FORCES HAD REGROUPED AFTER THE EVACUATION OF KOMPONG LUONG. DESPITE REPEATED ATTACKS BY THE ENEMY AT LOVEK, WE ARE HOLDING AND HAVE EVEN ENLARGED THE ENCLAVE'S PERIMETER. I CONSIDER THE SITUATION AT LOVEK TO BE STABILIZED. TO THE SOUTH OF LOVEK THE 7TH DIVISION AND THE 5TH KHMER ISLAMIC BRIGADE HAVE SUPPORTED THE LOVEK GARRISON BY ATTACKING THE ENEMY ON ROUTE 5, WHERE OUR TROOPS HAVE ADVANCED 6 KILOMETERS. THIS MOVEMENT ON ROUTE 5 HAS NOT ONLY INFLECTED HEAVY LOSSES ON THE ENEMY, BUT HAS ALSO PERMITTED THE NAVY TO DESTROY BARRIERS ON THE TONLE SAP. I AM PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE NAVY HAS REOPENED THE TONLE SAP TO NAVIGATION AND I HOPE THAT COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC CAN SOON RESUME ON THIS RIVER.

11. WHILE THE ENEMY CONTINUED HIS EFFORTS AT OUDONG, KOMPONG LUONG, AND LOVEK, HE ALSO ENGAGED OUR FORCES TO THE EAST OF THE MEKONG. ON
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MAY 1 THE ENEMY ATTACKED ANOTHER ISOLATED PROVINCIAL CAPITAL, PREY VENG. THE ENEMY ENGAGED SIX REGIMENTS IN THIS OPERATION, BUT WE WERE ABLE TO REINFORCE PREY VENG, WHICH CONTINUES TO RESIST. LET ME NOTE FOR YOU THE LOSSES AT PREY VENG: THE ENEMY LOST THREE TO FIVE BATTALIONS, WHILE OUR LOSSES WERE LESS THAN ONE BATTALION. ONE MONTH HAVING PASSED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS OFFENSIVE AND THE ENEMY HAVING FAILED TO PENETRATE OUR LINES, I CONSIDER THE PREY VENG OPERATION A GOVERNMENT SUCCESS.

12. BUT THE ENEMY IS PERSISTENT. HAVING FAILED AT KAMPOT, HE SHIFTED HIS TROOPS TO ISOLATED POSTS ON THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF ROUTE 4, WHICH HE ATTACKED WITH NUMERICALLY SUPERIOR FORCES. WE LOST SOME POSTS IN THIS ISOLATED REGION AND OTHERS WERE EVACUATED. THE ENCLAVES OF KOMPONG SEILA AND DAS KAN CHOR ARE STILL INTACT, HAVE BEEN REINFORCED, AND ARE BEING

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6313

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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SUPPORTED BY AIR AND ARTILLERY.

13. IF THE ENEMY REALIZES THAT HE CANNOT TAKE KAMPOT, LOVEK AND PREY VENG, HE MAY RETURN TO A FORMER STRATEGY WHICH HAS POLITICAL RATHER THAN MILITARY AIMS. IN THIS CASE, ONE CAN EXPECT THE NEMY TO TURN HIS EFFORTS TOWARD SUCH PLACES AS NEAK LUONG, ROUTE 1 ALONG THE MEKONG, OR ROUTE 4 SOUTH-
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WEST OF PHNOM PENH. AS YOU KNOW, ROUTE 1 IS OPEN TO NEAK LUONG AND LARGE RIVER CONVOYS SAIL UP THE MEKONG TO PHNOM PENH. SOME OF THESE CONVOYS HAVE BEEN ATTACKED, OF COURSE, BUT LOSSES HAVE BEEN MINIMAL. CONVOYS CONSISTING OF MORE THAN 20 VESSELS SAIL UP THE MEKONG THREE TIMES A MONTH AND OCCASIONALLY EVEN MORE OFTEN. THANKS TO THE PROTECTION AFFORDED BY THE NAVY AND THE AIR FORCE, NONE OF THESE CONVOYS

HAS EVER BEEN FORCED TO TURN BACK AND THEY HAVE CONTINUED TO BRING THEIR VALUABLE CARGO TO PHNOM PENH.

14. AS THE WATER LEVEL OF OUR RIVERS, STREAMS AND LAKES RISES DURING THE RAINY SEASON, OUR NAVAL UNITS WILL BE ABLE TO NAVIGATE NOT ONLY THE TONLE SAP AND THE MEKONG BUT MANY OF THEIR TRIBUTARIES. SOME OF YOU WILL REMEMBER THEIR BRAVE EXPLOITS LAST YEAR. I AM CONVINCED THAT THEY WILL DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES EVEN MORE THIS YEAR.

15. LET ME NOW SPEAK OF OUR AIR FORCE. IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECALL THAT DURING THE CURRENT DRY SEASON AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS WAR, OUR GROUND OPERATIONS HAVE NOT BENEFITTED FROM AMERICAN AIR SUPPORT. OUR AIR FORCE HAD TO QUICKLY FILL IN. YOU WILL AGREE WITH ME THAT THEY ACQUITTED THEMSELVES WELL AND THAT THEY WILL DO EVEN BETTER AS OUR GROWING GROUP OF PILOTS AND MECHANICS ACQUIRE EXPERIENCE.

16. PRIOR TO AUGUST OF LAST YEAR THERE WAS A KHMER AIR FORCE BUT IT WAS STILL IN ITS INFANCY. AMERICAN AIRCRAFT FILLED OUR SKY. NOW OUR TACTICAL AIRCRAFT FILL THE SKY. KHMER PILOTS LOCATE TARGETS, GUIDE OUR BOMBERS TO THEIR OBJECTIVES, AND ASSIST OUR ARTILLERY TO ADJUST ITS FIRE. SINCE AUGUST 1973, OUR T-28 BOMBERS HAVE DOUBLED THEIR STRIKE CAPABILITY. THEY HAVE FLOWN AS MANY AS EIGHTY T-28 MISSIONS IN ONE DAY IN THE SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE OF KAMPOT, PREY VENG, LOVEK AND KOMPONG THOM. OUR AIR FORCE HAS DEMONSTRATED THE CAPABILITY OF LAUNCHING BOMBING MISSIONS, RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS, AND NIGHT ATTACKS (WITH THE AC-47) FROM SUCH FORWARD LOCATIONS AS KOMPONG CHHNANG AND REAM. THUS, OTHER AIRFIELDS IN ADDITION TO POCHENTONG HAVE PROVED THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN SUPPORTING OUR GROUND TROOPS IN REGIONS FAR FROM THE CAPITAL.

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17 OUR MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT CAPABILITY HAS ALSO DOUBLED SINCE LAST AUGUST. THIS WAS A DECISIVE FACTOR IN THE DEFENSE OF KAMPOT, WHERE THREE BRIGADES WERE MOVED BY AIR FROM PHNOM PENH. THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT HAS PERMITTED US TO INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY RESUPPLY OPERATIONS

BOTH BY AIR DROPS AND AIR LANDINGS.

18. IN CONCLUSION, I BELIEVE IT UNDENIABLE THAT THE ENEMY IN THIS DRY SEASON HAS FAILED AT PHNOM PENH AND HAS NOT ATTAINED HIS GOALS IN THE PROVINCES. NO IMPORTANT VICTORY HAS BEEN WON BY THE ENEMY. I NOTE THAT THE NUMBER OF OUR RECRUITS IS INCREASING: APRIL AND MAY ALONE SAW 12,000 RECRUITS ENTER THE RANKS OF OUR ARMED FORCES. I

CONCLUDE THAT IN VIEW OF THE FACTORS WHICH I HAVE JUST
DESCRIBED AND WITH THE LOGISTICAL AID OF OUR FRIENDS, THE
REPUBLIC'S FORCES WILL FEND OFF THE BLOWS OF THE ENEMY AND THE
IDEAS FORWHICH WE FIGHT WILL TRIUMPH. END TEXT.
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